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## **AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN MINNESOTA: THIRD QUARTER 2005**

The average weekly wage in Hennepin County increased 6.1 percent from the third quarter of 2004 to the third quarter of 2005, the largest advance among Minnesota's seven counties with employment of 75,000 or more. Ramsey County (5.6 percent) had the second highest wage growth, followed by Dakota County (4.4 percent). Hennepin County, the State's largest county based on employment, had the highest average weekly wage, \$990; Ramsey County followed with a wage of \$864, then Olmsted County, averaging \$854. (See table 1.) Regional Commissioner Jay A. Mousa noted that among Minnesota's seven largest counties, none reported wage growth above the national increase of 6.1 percent, but three had wages above the national level of \$777.

### **Wage levels**

The three Minnesota counties with wages exceeding the national level did so by about 10 percent or more. The differential was greatest in Hennepin County where wages were \$113, or 27 percent, above the national average, ranking it 23<sup>rd</sup> among the 322 largest counties in the U.S. Ramsey and Olmsted Counties, with wages \$87 and \$77, respectively, above that for the nation, ranked 60<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup>, respectively. All three counties were in the top quarter of the nationwide ranking by wage level. In addition, one Minnesota County, Dakota, had a weekly wage matching the national average and ranked 116<sup>th</sup>.

At the other end of the spectrum, Stearns and St. Louis Counties reported the lowest average weekly wages in the State, \$628 and \$655, respectively, ranking them 284<sup>th</sup> and 259<sup>th</sup>. Both of these Minnesota counties had wages levels in the bottom quartile of the national ranking.

Across the country, average weekly wages were higher than the national average in 115 of the largest 322 U.S. counties. New York County, N.Y., held the top position among the large counties with an average weekly wage of \$1,419. Santa Clara, Calif., was second with an average wage of \$1,403, followed by Arlington, Va. (\$1,292), San Mateo, Calif. (\$1,268), and Washington, D.C. (\$1,265).

Nationwide there were 206 counties with an average weekly wage below the national average in the third quarter of 2005. The lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron County, Texas (\$486), followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$499), Horry, S.C. (\$505), and Webb, Texas, and Yakima, Wash. (\$525 each).

At the state level, the average weekly wage in Minnesota was \$790, \$13 above the nationwide figure, ranking 14<sup>th</sup> highest among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. (See table 2.) The five highest wage levels in the nation were in the District of Columbia (\$1,265), Connecticut (\$966), Massachusetts (\$947), New York (\$941), and New Jersey (\$928). Average weekly wages in this group were 19 percent or more above that for the nation. At the other end of the scale, four states had wage levels averaging 75 percent or less of national earnings: Montana (\$563), South Dakota (\$567), Mississippi (\$573), and North Dakota (\$581).

### **Over-the-year changes**

None of Minnesota's seven large counties recorded wage growth above the national increase of 6.1 percent in the third quarter of 2005; however, Hennepin County's increase equaled the national average and ranked 133<sup>rd</sup> in the nation. (See table 1.) Ramsey County's 5.6-percent increase ranked 168<sup>th</sup> among the 322 large counties nationwide, while Dakota County's 4.4-percent wage growth was 248<sup>th</sup>.

Four counties--Anoka, Olmsted, St. Louis, and Stearns--had wage gains of less than 4 percent over the year; these increases were among the lowest in the nation. Anoka County had the lowest wage increase in the State, 2.0 percent, and ranked 302<sup>nd</sup> in the nation. Olmsted County's wage gain of 3.1 percent was the second lowest in Minnesota and ranked 291<sup>st</sup> nationwide. Both St. Louis and Stearns Counties had wage increases of 3.5 percent and ranked 283<sup>rd</sup>. None of the largest counties in Minnesota experienced a wage decline.

Among the largest counties, Passaic, N.J., led the nation in growth in average weekly wages with an increase of 19.0 percent over the year. Fort Bend, Texas, was second with 15.4-percent growth, followed by the counties of Boulder, Colo. (13.8 percent), and San Mateo, Calif., and Harrison, Miss. (12.7 percent each). The average weekly wage gains for Harrison, Miss., and Orleans, La. (10.7 percent), were boosted as a result of the disproportionate job and pay losses in lower-paid industries following Hurricane Katrina.

Five counties in the U.S. experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. Clayton County, Ga., had the largest decrease, -5.1 percent, followed by the counties of Benton, Ark. (-1.2 percent), Trumbull, Ohio (-0.6 percent), Saginaw, Mich. (-0.4 percent), and St. Joseph, Ind. (-0.1 percent).

At the state level, the average weekly wage in Minnesota increased 4.9 percent, ranking it 43<sup>rd</sup> among the 50 states and District of Columbia. The neighboring states of Iowa and Wisconsin had wage gains averaging 6.1 and 5.4 percent, respectively. (See table 2.) The highest over-the-year wage growth in the third quarter of 2005 was recorded by Arizona (8.2 percent), then Florida (8.1 percent) and Wyoming (8.0 percent), and the lowest, by Michigan and Rhode Island (4.1 percent each).

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to state and federal unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.6 million employer reports cover 132.9 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly values are calculated by dividing quarterly total wages by the average of the three monthly employment levels of those covered by UI programs. The result is then divided by 13, the number of weeks in

a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or states for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Technical Note below) and may not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

### **Additional statistics and other information**

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2004* is available for sale from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250, telephone 866-512-1800, outside Washington, D.C. Within Washington, D.C., the telephone number is 202-512-1800. The fax number is 202-512-2104. The bulletin is now available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn04.htm>. Also, the quarterly press release, *County Employment and Wages*, presents employment and wage data for the largest counties in the U.S. and is available at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Midwest Information Office in Chicago at (312) 353-1880 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT.

### **Hurricanes Katrina and Rita**

The measures of employment and wages reported in this news release reflect the impact of Hurricane Katrina and ongoing labor market trends. Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, with catastrophic effects in parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. This event occurred after the August QCEW reference period and before the September period. Its effects are first reflected in the September QCEW employment counts and the wage totals for the third quarter of 2005. QCEW nonresponse adjustment methods were modified for September 2005 to better reflect the impact of the hurricane in parts of Louisiana and Mississippi. For more information, see the QCEW section of the Katrina coverage on the BLS Web site (<http://www.bls.gov/katrina/qcewquestions.htm>).

Hurricane Rita made landfall September 24, after the September reference period. The impact of this event did not warrant changes to QCEW methodology for the third quarter of 2005.

## TECHNICAL NOTE

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

**Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 7 largest counties in Minnesota, third quarter 2005(2)**

Area	Employment	Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	September 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, third quarter 2004-05 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6)	132,929.3	\$777	--	6.1	--
Minnesota	2,671.9	790	14	4.9	43
Anoka, Minn.	115.6	751	141	2.0	302
Dakota, Minn.	171.8	777	116	4.4	248
Hennepin, Minn.	837.8	990	23	6.1	133
Olmsted, Minn.	89.4	854	68	3.1	291
Ramsey, Minn.	334.1	864	60	5.6	168
St. Louis, Minn.	95.0	655	259	3.5	283
Stearns, Minn.	78.3	628	284	3.5	283

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(5) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(6) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

**Table 2. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, third quarter 2005(2)**

State	Employment	Average weekly wage (3)			
	September 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2004-05	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	132,929.3	\$777	-	6.1	-
Alabama	1,905.9	669	32	6.4	17
Alaska	320.2	797	13	5.6	30
Arizona	2,511.8	748	20	8.2	1
Arkansas	1,165.7	599	46	4.9	43
California	15,443.3	887	6	7.0	8
Colorado	2,212.1	808	11	7.3	7
Connecticut	1,655.2	966	2	5.3	38
Delaware	420.1	823	9	7.0	8
District of Columbia	666.4	1,265	1	4.5	48
Florida	7,801.6	708	26	8.1	2
Georgia	3,960.8	748	20	5.2	40
Hawaii	606.0	714	24	5.8	23
Idaho	635.5	605	45	6.0	19
Illinois	5,820.7	825	8	5.9	21
Indiana	2,916.3	689	29	5.2	40
Iowa	1,461.1	641	37	6.1	18
Kansas	1,315.3	659	34	6.5	15
Kentucky	1,779.5	651	35	5.2	40
Louisiana	1,770.8	637	39	6.9	10
Maine	606.0	631	42	4.6	46
Maryland	2,526.5	854	7	7.6	5
Massachusetts	3,193.3	947	3	4.5	48
Michigan	4,353.1	787	15	4.1	50
Minnesota	2,671.9	790	14	4.9	43
Mississippi	1,098.4	573	49	5.9	21
Missouri	2,696.2	691	27	5.5	33
Montana	424.2	563	51	7.4	6
Nebraska	896.7	633	41	5.3	38
Nevada	1,242.5	750	19	6.7	12
New Hampshire	630.7	772	16	5.8	23
New Jersey	3,960.8	928	5	5.8	23
New Mexico	791.0	629	43	6.8	11
New York	8,394.8	941	4	5.7	26
North Carolina	3,903.7	690	28	5.7	26
North Dakota	335.4	581	48	6.0	19
Ohio	5,360.6	723	23	5.5	33
Oklahoma	1,482.5	612	44	5.7	26
Oregon	1,683.4	714	24	5.6	30
Pennsylvania	5,597.6	764	18	5.7	26
Rhode Island	488.9	736	22	4.1	50
South Carolina	1,831.2	637	39	5.6	30
South Dakota	381.6	567	50	5.4	35
Tennessee	2,724.0	689	29	4.6	46
Texas	9,659.3	767	17	6.7	12
Utah	1,135.1	647	36	6.6	14
Vermont	303.4	663	33	4.7	45
Virginia	3,617.7	815	10	7.7	4
Washington	2,820.6	801	12	6.5	15
West Virginia	702.9	589	47	5.4	35
Wisconsin	2,783.4	688	31	5.4	35
Wyoming	263.4	638	38	8.0	3
Puerto Rico	1,037.4	435	(5)	3.8	(5)
Virgin Islands	44.0	616	(5)	2.8	(5)

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(5) Data not included in the national ranking.